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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 000589

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DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS, S/CT; NSC FOR E. MILLARD

LONDON FOR POL/RIEDEL

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TAGS: PGOV PTER EALD ASEC CE NO JA LTTE

SUBJECT: Tamil Tigers criticize U.S. over "exclusion" from Washington seminar

Refs: (A) SA/INS-Colombo 04/04/03 class e-mail
- (B) FBIS Reston Va DTG 041354Z Apr 03
- (C) Colombo 576, and previous

(U) Classified by Ambassador E. Ashley Wills.
Reasons: 1.5 (b, d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: In a rare formal public statement, the Tamil Tigers have criticized the U.S. over not being invited to the upcoming Washington Seminar on Sri Lanka. Mission is also picking up some low-key bad vibes from the group's supporters in Sri Lanka over the matter. Overall, our guess is that the Tigers -- who know very well they are on our FTO list -- will get over their disappointment at not being invited in short order. END SUMMARY.

Tigers Hit Out at U.S.

2. (SBU) The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have criticized the U.S. over not being invited to the State Department-sponsored Washington Seminar on Sri Lanka. (Note: The April 14 seminar will bring together over 30 countries and many international organizations to discuss Sri Lanka's peace process, and reconstruction and development needs. It is part of the buildup to the Tokyo donors conference in June. End Note.) The LTTE's comments were made in a formal public statement issued late April 4. (Note: Key sections of the statement are contained in Para 8.)

3. (SBU) In its specifics, the LTTE's statement said the group was "disappointed by its exclusion" from the conference. The statement claimed that the government and the LTTE had agreed to an "equal and joint partnership" regarding efforts to solicit international assistance. By not inviting the Tigers to the seminar, "the United States (had) undermined this joint effort by isolating the LTTE and solely promoting the GSL at the preliminary meeting on April 14...(The U.S. decision) also undermines confidence in both the reconstruction initiative and the peace process." The statement closed by urging donors to endorse "joint participation" by the GSL and the LTTE in reconstruction and development efforts in the future.

A Rare Formal Public Statement

4. (C) The way the statement was issued indicated the high precedence that the LTTE gave the matter. Tiger views are often carried by pro-LTTE web-sites and newspapers. The April 4 statement, however, was issued as an "urgent press release" direct from the LTTE's civilian offices in Kilinochchi in Tiger-controlled northern Sri Lanka. It is very rare for the usually secretive group to issue a formal press statement, which

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is something it does only on matters it considers highly important. (Note: In the past, for example, the group has issued formal statements on such major issues as its agreement to enter into face-to-face talks with the GSL late last year and its agreement to the terms of the February 2002 ceasefire accord.)

Bad Vibrations from LTTE Supporters

5. (C) In the days before the issuance of the statement, Mission had been picking up bad vibrations from LTTE supporters toward the U.S. Last week, for example, a pro-LTTE contact in Jaffna recommended that a Mission poloff not visit Jaffna at this time because the situation was "tense" there. Asked to explain, the contact asserted that Tamils were not happy with U.S. policy over Iraq and were planning a demonstration on

April 4. As reported in Mission updates re local reaction to Operation Iraqi Freedom (see Septels), Mission had picked up absolutely no signs of dissonance from Tamils re U.S. actions in the Gulf up to the point when this comment was made. Mission later heard that the LTTE, angry over not being invited to the Washington seminar, was indeed the sponsor of the April 4 anti-war rally in Jaffna city. (Note: In any event, the rally was peaceful and quite small, with only about 40 people in attendance.)

16. (C) ((Note: Poloff asked M. Senethirajah, a senior Tamil National Alliance, "TNA," MP, about the press statement. Senethirajah, who is very pro-LTTE, responded that he had no comment at this time. He noted that TNA MPs were due to meet with LTTE leaders in Kilinochchi on April 10 in one of their periodic meetings. He said this meeting should provide more clarity re LTTE views on this matter.)))

COMMENT

17. (C) Despite their evident disappointment, our guess is that the Tigers will get over this matter in short order. We doubt the group wants to pick a fight with the U.S. The Tigers know very well that they are on our Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) list and had no chance of being invited to the U.S. to attend the April 14 meeting. (Note: In the days preceding the Tiger statement, Mission had been underscoring this point re the FTO with news organizations when asked about the USG position. Department made the same point in its press guidance contained in Ref A.) Indeed, the tone of their statement was more one of sorrow than of anger. In issuing the press statement, the LTTE was probably making a public show of disappointment for the sake of its Tamil supporters. END COMMENT.

LTTE Statement

18. (U) Key sections of the LTTE's press statement follow:

Begin text:

Urgent Press Release
LTTE Headquarters
Kilinochchi
April 4, 2003

LTTE's Exclusion from Donor Conference Undermines Peace Process

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is disappointed by its exclusion from the international conference to support reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in the north and east of Sri Lanka to be hosted by the United States in Washington on April 14.

From the outset of the Norwegian-brokered negotiations, the two parties to the conflict, the LTTE and the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL), agreed to equal and joint partnership in efforts to solicit international financial assistance for reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in the north and east of Sri Lanka. We point out that Sub-Committee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs was formed in the context of this equal and joint partnership. It was also in this context that the first international donor conference held in Oslo on November 25, 2002 was successfully staged. Whilst funds were pledged for urgent needs at that meeting, a larger donor conference to be held in June this year in Japan was promoted as the main forum for securing international assistance for reconstruction efforts in the war-torn Tamil areas.

Regrettably, the United States has undermined this joint effort by isolating the LTTE and solely promoting the GoSL at the preliminary meeting on April 14. The exclusion of the LTTE from reconstruction efforts in the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka is against the spirit of the peace process. It also undermines confidence in both the reconstruction initiative and the peace process. The LTTE is therefore dismayed and disappointed by the US action.

We call upon the United States and international donors to actively support the Norwegian peace process by endorsing the joint participation of the LTTE and GoSL in reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in the north and east of Sri Lanka.

End text.

[19](#). (U) Minimize considered.

WILLS